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Lecture

RUSSIA

by

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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE:

Gentlemen: The question before us this morning is the most vital question of American foreign policy at this juncture. It is written about and speculated about ad infinitum by all the editorialists, columnists and lecturers in this country. The press is full of it, the radio is full of it, conversation of people is full of it. It is claiming the attention of the nation in a way which I think no question of foreign policy has ever claimed it in times of peace. And what I would like to do this morning is to examine the question with you in a little more detailed way than it is usually treated, bearing in mind the realities of the situation as we know them from service on the spot, in Moscow, and to see whether we can not, in this way, get a little clearer and a more hopeful view of the picture.

First of all - lets just undertake a brief situation estimate, to begin with. Twenty-seven years ago there was born into this world by virtue of the Russian Revolution a new state which occupied most of the territory and inherited many of the traditions of the old tsarist state. But it was not quite like anything that the modern world had known before. It came into existence breathing venom and hatred and implacable hostility toward the entire capitalist world and promising to overthrow the world of capitalism in very short order. Finding this impossible, for the time being at least, it settled down to a sort of surly co-existence with capitalist nations, professing its readiness to exchange representatives with them and to trade with them, but reaffirming at frequent intervals its determination to destroy them in the end.

For a long time, as you all know, we refused to recognize this government. But in taking this position we were faced with increasing opposition, partly from business men who wished to trade with Russia, partly from a liberal opposition which refused to take the Russians at their word, which insisted that their talk of hostility to the outside world was only palaver, and which believed that if we were to enter into relations with them and exhibit confidence in them, their basic attitude toward the outside world would be altered, and they would become easier people to live with. Besides, it was argued, the growing aggressiveness of Japan and Germany made it silly not to have relations with a government whose relations to both those countries, was of such obvious importance.

In response to these sentiments, we finally recognized Russia in the fall of 1933, 13 years ago. The experiment was hardly successful in the ways people had hoped. The Russian attitude toward us did not change. Trade did not increase. Many of the Americans sent to Moscow to represent us became disillusioned and embittered. But all this was of no great importance. Our relations with Russia at that time were not very extensive. We did not have much to deal with them about. They were still too weak to threaten other nations or to upset the international apple cart. American public did not think much about them. Enthusiasm for Russia, in particular, was pretty well confined to a few crackpot communists, a few vague and muddle-headed liberals, and a few business men who hoped to be favored with Soviet orders if they took a pro-Soviet line. The rest of the people were more or less indifferent to the Russians. And after the Soviet Government made a non-aggression ^{sion} ~~aggression~~ /

pact with the Germans in 1939 and divided most of eastern Europe up with Hitler, the name of Russia produced scarcely any reaction in this country other than one of disgust.

The German attack on Russia in 1941 and later the German declaration of war on us changed all this basically. We found ourselves fighting side by side with the Russians. Our nature is such that I think all of us like to be friends with people we are working with and fighting side by side with. Besides, it became increasingly clear to all of us that in the post-war world our relations with Russia would be far more important than they ever were before. For these reasons, there was a great urge in American opinion to clinch American-Russian friendship for good. Carried along by this urge, the typical liberal view of the Soviet leaders, as men whose friendship could be won by demonstrations of good will on our part, came to prevail in the government of this country. As Forest Davis so clearly showed in his articles in the Saturday Evening Post a year or two ago, this view was adopted by President Roosevelt himself; and in the sincere and gallant efforts which he made to put it into effect and to get results from it he had the sympathy, I think, of practically every good American.

But I think I should interject at this point, the fact that this policy caused grave doubts and uneasiness to many of us who knew the Soviet Union well. We doubted even at that time the ability of the Soviet Government to react favorably to such an approach. We felt that this approach was based not on a real understanding of Russian character but only on a subjective estimate of how we our-

selves would react in a given situation. And we were convinced that the Russians were not like ourselves. We were afraid that the effort would come a cropper. Not only that, but we were afraid it would boomerang and produce a reaction of irritation against Russia which would be more dangerous than anything else. For this reason, we did our best to warn our government that we saw dangers ahead of us on this path. But this was not easy to do. Everybody was absorbed with wartime work. Policy was wrapped up in secret decisions of the White House and the Joint Chiefs of Staff which were not easy to anticipate in advance and which, once taken, were almost impossible to change or correct. We were prevented from taking the issue to the public by the reflection that anything we might say along this line would be exploited by the enemy as an indication of disunity between the Allies. And we therefore had little choice but to shut up and go ahead with the war-time jobs assigned to us. I tell you this not by way of boasting of any foresightedness on the part of those of us who are considered Russian experts--it was our business to know and to foresee these things. I tell you this only in order that you may see that the view of Russian-American relations I am going to outline to you is not an afterthought, not merely a hysterical reaction to the ugly realities of the moment, but the product of long-term considerations which were apparent to informed people long before details of the present difficulties were visible on the horizon.

The policy of trying to make friends with Russia by demonstrations of good will and confidence, even at the sacrifice of more

immediate American interests, was therefore pursued with all the resources at our disposal, over a period of about 3 years. Lend Lease in itself cannot of course, be considered a part of this policy. It was a military measure, particularly in its early phases. But in the way in which it was granted, in the earnestness of the effort which we made to respond to all Russian wishes, despite the unwillingness of the Russians to justify their requirements, despite their unwillingness to let us see how our contributions were being used, despite their failure to give us what we felt was adequate recognition in their press--in all of this Lend Lease was a demonstration of America's desire for friendship with the Russian people. The same is true of our Red Cross aid and of the shipments under the aegis of the Russian War Relief. By the same token, we permitted the Russians to sell goods for cash in this country while we were delivering to them only on terms of Lend Lease, and we threw the country open to a horde of Soviet officials who carried out thousands of visits to industrial enterprises classified as important to the national defense even though we would have been justified by considerations of state security in curtailing strictly this type of activity. It was largely in deference to the same hope of winning Russian confidence and collaboration, I think, that we then decided to base our post-war foreign policy on an international organization dedicated to certain common principles rather than on the sheer national interests of this country. But in addition to that, and perhaps more important still, we conceded to Russia in effect certain expansions of territory, both in the Far East and in Eastern

Europe, which we would probably not have conceded in the same way if we had not wished to have Russia as a future friend; and in addition to that we acquiesced in the establishment of a regime of Russian domination in large further parts of southern and eastern Europe which gave the Russians the possibility of spiking any true rehabilitation of the European continent and thereby of jeopardizing the whole value to us of our victory in Europe;--for the long term stability of the European continent under a system of friendly states is the only thing the American people really seek in that area and perhaps the only thing, beyond the vital strategic defense of this country, which would have been worth our fighting for on the European battlefields.

And now since the war ended, we have gone along patiently trying to achieve solutions along these lines which would certainly leave to the Russians as handsome a share of influence in the world as their historical record as a great power could possibly warrant, even though this policy has cost our country a great deal in occupation costs, in added relief to a maladjusted and disorganized continent and in trouble and patience. And when people imply, as Mr. Wallace recently did, that our policies in recent years have not been such as to reassure the Russians about our intentions, I can only say that to my mind that implication is one of the most preposterous and fantastic distortions of contemporary history that has ever seriously been put forward by thinking and responsible people. I know of no instance in world history in which any people and government have ever gone to such lengths to demonstrate their friendliness and their desire for good neighborly relations

with another country as this government went to in its relations with Russia in the years from 1942 to 1945.

We have now come to the realization that these efforts have not been successful. We have found that the Russians are not only not grateful for what they have received but that they profess indignation for not receiving more. We find the Russians balancing their books every night and coming forward the next morning with unabashed demands for further concessions at every point. We find Russia working night and day for the increase of her own military power, while the Soviet Government accuses us of aggressive intentions in the world and while the Soviet propaganda machine abroad uses every device and every resource at its disposal to inhibit the maintenance of American military power at even its present dubious level. We find the Russians unwilling to collaborate in most of the international arrangements we have set up under the United Nations organization or in general connection with it, and pursuing vigorous unilateral policies aimed at the increase in the power and authority of the Soviet state at the expense of the power and authority of other countries.

We find ourselves standing, therefore, troubled, confused and somewhat alarmed at this state of affairs, obliged to recognize that the Russians have not responded to the approach we had hoped they would respond to and that this situation, particularly in view of the presence of atomic energy in this post-war world, is replete with serious danger for the future of world peace, and that we have a heavy decision to make the heavy decision as to where we go from here.

Now this is the point at which I think many Americans wonder off into one of two main aberrations- and, personally, I don't know which of the two is most fallacious and most dangerous. The first is the theory put forward by Wallace. According to this theory, Soviet suspicions of us are sincere and partially justified; we have not done enough to demonstrate our confidence in Russia; we should give further proof of this by reducing still further our armed forces, by giving up the military bases which we hold in other parts of the world, by ascertaining what Russia believes is necessary to her own security and seeing that she gets it; by ceasing to worry about the veto power on atomic energy and abandoning the step-by-step principle embodied in our present plan for the achievement of international atomic energy control, and by granting a large loan to Russia as a gesture of good will, without insisting as we have been doing that Russia agree to abide by the principles which we feel must prevail in international business dealings if world stability is to be achieved.

Now, I could deal for the rest of the morning with this concept, but I am not going to. It is a long story I do not wish to take time for it at this juncture. There are other things I feel are more important. I am only going to ask you to take my word for it that this line of thought is basically erroneous and unprofitable. It is based on false premises. It has been tried time and time again by well-meaning people and has invariably failed. It ignores basic Russian psychology. It ignores Communist ideology. Worst of all, it plays directly into the hands of the most arrogant and unreasonable elements in Soviet society. It is the beginning of a

road that leads no where, except to the capitulation of the United States as a great power in this world and as the guardian of its own security. Even if it had a chance of success, it would still constitute a frivolous gambling away of the fruits of victory and to my mind an act of irresponsibility to the memory of the Americans who died in this recent war. But I can assure you that it has not even any chance of success. It is not even an experiment. It is only the repetition of demonstrated error.

The other aberration - into which even more Americans seem to fall - is to throw up the sponge at this point and to conclude that war with Russia is inevitable.

I cannot go along with this, either. I think it is a very faint-hearted and premature conclusion. In my mind, recognition of the fallaciousness of the Wallace doctrine should be the beginning, not the end, of constructive thought on this subject.

Now how do we proceed with this constructive thought? I think we should begin by reflecting a little more carefully on the nature of the Soviet regime. What sort of people are they who govern Russian policy?

In the first place, these people are essentially fanatics. They have been committed from youth, without exception, to a set of ideas which purports to have all the answers to human problems. It is so broad in its area of application that it has made possible a creation of an entirely new Soviet encyclopedia. It is one of the characteristics of this faith, as of all militant faiths, that its believers do not question it, particularly when they are

speaking out loud. Acceptance of it must be implicit in every-
thing they do and say. And it is one of the tenets of this faith
that the capitalist world is evil and hostile and that the world
of socialism, of which the Kremlin is the leader, will not be safe
until capitalism has been destroyed. Note, therefore, that the
communist leaders are under the obligation of proceeding outwardly,
even within the limits of their own family, on the assumption in
all cases that there is a basic conflict between the two worlds
which can only be decided by the final victory of one or the other.
And note also, that as fanatics, they are not amenable to reason-
able argument. This is very important. You talk at them, not to
them.

Secondly, these Soviet leaders are the heirs to the power of
tsardom. There's a lot of good old Russian tradition in their
system. One essential characteristic of the Russian conception of
state power has been the fact that it was never able to achieve
any permanent working agreement with any independent foreign power
with which it came in contact. Russia never had any permanent
friends in the family of nations, in the sense that we and Canada
are friends today. Russia's neighbors were all Russia's enemies.
Whose fault this was, I leave to the historians. I merely regis-
ter the fact. And in view of this situation, the Russian has
learned to view his relationships to the outside world in terms
of deadly rivalry. He has come to believe that his gain must be
the other fellows loss and vice versa. He has come to think of
international relations only in terms of power competition.
Please note, again, that this inclines him to keep up steady pres-

sure on other people for the achievement of his aims and to expect other people to be doing the same to him.

Another basic characteristic of Russian mentality is the extreme wariness and elasticity of the Russian in questions of grand strategy, both political and military. This stems undoubtedly from the early position of the Russians as a relatively unwarlike people, living on a great unprotected plain and open to the sudden and unpredictable attacks of formidable nomadic enemies. While the Russians are the most un-naval of peoples, there is nevertheless something of Naval principles in their concept of strategy. They are absorbed with the fear that they might be caught off-base with the inferior force. They know that they can not be equally strong everywhere and at the same time. For this reason, their conception of the border lines of their power is very elastic. While they vigorously explore possible lines of advance they are very careful not to lose the safe lines of retreat. And above all, it is their instinct to keep the other fellow in the dark as to the strength and nature and disposition of their forces even in peace time. For they have usually been forced to lead from weakness; and part of the game has been to conceal that weakness and so to prevent the other fellow from exploiting it. Now please note what follows from this: namely, that while the Russian applies steady pressure and takes advantage of all the breaks, he is very sensitive in the calculation of forces and very careful not to join battle with a superior adversary. And he is very conscious of one of the great truth's of naval warfare: namely, that a force sufficiently superior to that of the enemy will probable never have to

be used. Its mere existence does the trick. (4)

Fourthly, remember that these people in the Kremlin are running what is after all a very bloody dictatorship. Their power was established at the cost of millions of lives. They are smart enough to know that if you are going to rule by cruelty, you must be completely cruel. There can be no half-way measures. For this reason, they take no half-way measures; and thus far they have been able to hold on successfully. But they have to remember that their regime has no real sanction in the hearts of the people, and that if they should ever slip they would fall with a bang. For this reason, they have to be doubly cautious in what they do. They can not afford to get into trouble. They can not afford to get mixed up in adventures which could undermine in any way their authority at home. This means, on one hand, that they are going to resist violently any effort on the part of other people to break down the iron curtain which is one of the means by which they succeed in maintaining dictatorial power. But on the other hand, it means that if they see they are being put on the spot in such a way as to jeopardize their prestige with their own people they will be quick enough to make the necessary adjustments.

Finally, remember that the Russian is by nature a master psychologist, calculating and cynical in his judgments of other people, contemptuous of weakness and hypocrisy, schooled in all the arts of persuasion and intimidation. Above all, he is an actor a master dissimulator; he can put on any sort of an act he wishes, and yet remain completely detached behind it all. He is used to having to dissemble his feelings and almost does so on principle. (5)

This means that he is apt to be most dangerous when he appears to be most agreeable. But it also means that he is apt to act most arrogantly and aggressively when he is really in the weakest position. For this reason, his outward expressions of irritations and suspicion need not be taken too seriously. And you can count on it that when he is out maneuvered, confronted with a superior force, and obliged to retreat, he will always do so without real rancor. To show anger over a real reverse would be to admit that reverse, and the Russian never admits his real reverses. He simply chalks one up to the credit of the other fellow, and reflects that he will have to be smarter next time.

Now it seems to me that it ought to be perfectly possible to work out a way of dealing successfully with this psychological pattern, as long as you have the superior force. And we, as the leaders of the western world, still have that preponderance of force, both politically and militarily, if we want to use it. It is only a question of maneuver, of check and counter-check. It is the question of the manipulation of our political and military forces in such a way that the Russians will always be confronted with superior strength at every turn of the game.

Of course, this must not be done in a provocative manner, or in a way which arouses considerations of prestige. There must be no threats and no waving of clubs. Things must be done quietly and flexibly, with subtlety and sophistication, not as a series of dramatic gestures. You must not put people on the spot. But if this one rule is observed, there is no reason, in theory, why it should not be possible for us to contain the Russians indefin-

itely by confronting them firmly but politely with superior strength at every turn of the game. And I think that eventually we ought even to be able to maneuver them back into the limits within which we would like them to stay.

Now the real question then, is this; is a democracy capable of disposing of its strength in peace time in such a way as to achieve these ends? Can we possibly have the political flexibility and coordination which are necessary to this purpose?

Well, if you ask me whether we have it now, my answer is no. If we had it today, our negotiations over the future of the port of Trieste would be backed up by quiet but effective augmentations of our military and air strength in that area, designed to discourage the Yugoslavs from hoping and planning for a future forceful seizure of the Trieste district. By the same token, if we had it today, our views about the Dardenelles would be accompanied by the adoption of a real policy with respect to the Middle East and by real efforts to evolve some agreement with the British there rather than by our helping to create new power vacuums into which the Russians can hardly fail to flow. And if we had it today, negotiations on atomic energy would be accompanied rather than followed by measures of domestic legislation which would make it entirely clear to any hopeful foreign minds that this country is not going to be easily or painlessly conquered by atomic weapons. And at every point on the diplomatic battle-lines, we would be combining words with action, not just with other words. So, I don't think we have it today.

But if you ask me whether we can have such flexibility and

such coordination of policy, I can only say that I don't see why not. If this is the only promising way of coping with the Russian problem, and I am persuaded that it is, then it is worth a great deal of effort in our government along the lines of the coordination of military and political policy. The steps that are required in this direction are radical, admittedly; but they are not impossible and they do not really contradict our policies of government. There has got to be a far better machinery for policy coordination. I think, in fact, that there has to be established some formal organization for decision and action at the Cabinet level, similar to what other countries have. There has to be more effective liaison between the Executive and Congress. There has to be a little better indoctrination of the American public as to the powers and prerogatives of government in the field of foreign affairs, and as to the necessity for public restraint and self-discipline in dealing with these matters. Finally there has to be more sheer courage in government in the devising of policies and in the defending of its policies before domestic criticism.

If these things could be achieved, I personally could see within the realms of possibility an American policy which would be successful in coping with the Russian problem by measures short of war. It would not solve the Russian problem. You never really solve problems like that; you only learn to live with them after a fashion and to avoid major catastrophe. But that I do think we could do. And I believe that in the long run such a policy of patience and understanding and firmness might achieve results more favorable than anything which would seem possible at the outset.

If we could follow this policy consistently enough over a long enough period of time, I believe that the logic of it would enter into the Soviet system as a whole and bring about changes there which would be beneficial to everyone.

But this is essentially a question of the quality of our own society, of our own capacity for meeting situations in a democratic way. It is just a question of how good we are, of how good democracy is in the world of today. And if this question can force us to pull ourselves together and to produce results out of our democratic form of society which we can not otherwise have produced, I think perhaps we may call our Russian friends a blessing rather than a plague. We would all do well, I think, to bear in mind the wise words of Shakespeare's King Henry the Fifth;

"..... God Almighty!
There is some soul of goodness in things evil,
Would men observingly distil it out;
For our bad neighbor makes us early stirrers,
Which is both healthful and good husbandry;
Besides, they are our outward consciences
And preachers to us all; admonishing
That we should dress us fairly for our end.
Thus may we gather honey from the weed,
And make a moral of the devil himself."